

**Inside**

Employee Profile: Kay Kletka	3
Drain Brain?	4-5
Noble Deed	6
Veteran Mgr: Joe Hughes	7
Cool News	8

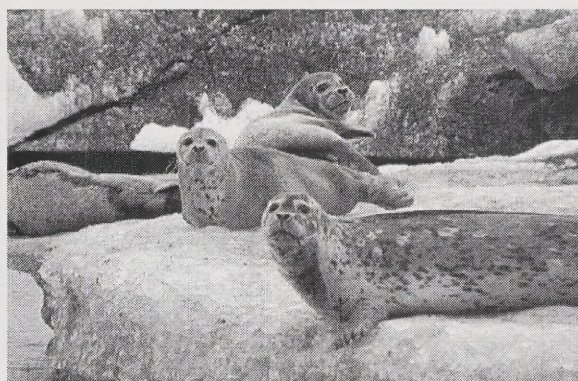
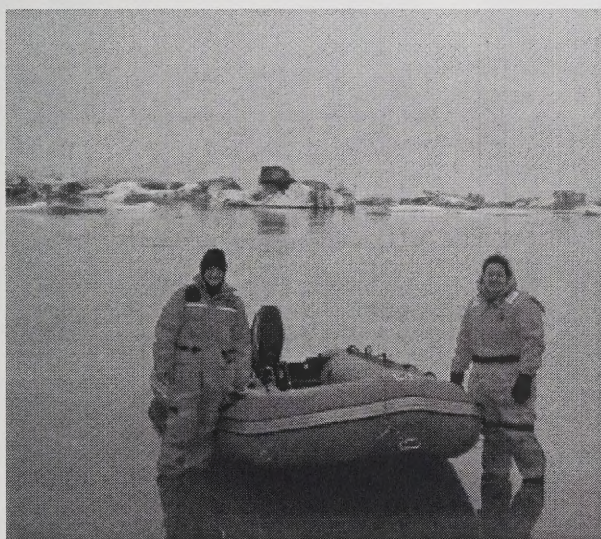
Right photo-members of the University of Alaska seal team looking for seals.

# ALASKA People



September /October/November 2002

## Huge Seal Populations Have Scientists Scratching Heads



Hundreds of harbor seals congregate on Bering Glacier icebergs.

It is 6:05 am and **Scott Guyer's** internal alarm begins to buzz. Although its early he's fully awake and he's thinking about the day's schedule. His breath is fully visible inside the tent. As he puts on his jeans and sweatshirt, he peaks outside to crystal skies, so there's no need for rain gear today, at least not yet. It's another glorious day at the Bering Glacier. Despite a slight breeze coming from the east rippling across Vitus Lake, this sunny, clear weather means a good day for capturing harbor seals.

But Guyer, a natural resource specialist, has more pressing matters than the weather and the glacier's beauty. He and **John Payne**, BLM's state wildlife biologist, have breakfast duty. So Guyer quickly puts on his boots and heads to the kitchen weatherport tent.



Left—Scott Guyer prepares breakfast in the kitchen heliport at BLM's Bering Glacier camp. Above left—University of Alaska researchers (l-r) Danielle Savarese and Leslie Sarten are ready to travel Vitus Lake at the Bering Glacier in search of harbor seals.

Pancakes and bacon are on the menu. By mid morning after hours of checking equipment, fueling boats, putting on wet suits and going over the plan for the day, Guyer and the University of Alaska's harbor seal team are off in search of seals.

The UAA seal team is the newest group operating out of BLM's research camp at the Bering Glacier. Last summer from mid-July

to mid-August eight teams of researchers from universities and agencies conducted studies on the geology, botany, and fisheries at the glacier. These scientists are drawn to the area because of the glacier's diverse flora and fauna and sensitive wildlife and fish species. Payne, who is also BLM's Bering project leader has long been fascinated by the area. He says, "There aren't

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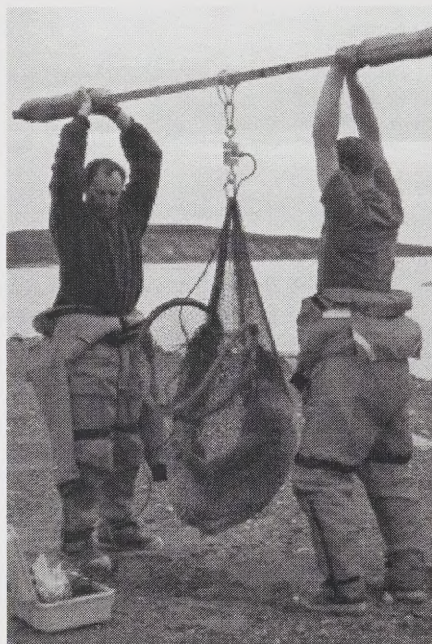
Above—UAA seal capture team maneuvering around icebergs on Vitus Lake. Right—UAF researchers Steve Trimble and Shawn Harper weighing seals.

*continued from front page*

that many places in the world that can match its biological and physical attributes." Surrounded by 18,000 foot mountains, the Gulf of Alaska and prevailing winds — the Bering Glacier area is a special ecoregion.

The glacier, which is the largest in North America, is under BLM management. Just east of Cordova, it encompasses 118 miles long and 2,200 square miles. BLM established its own research camp there after the U.S. Geological Survey vacated the camp in 1977. Initially BLM would lend its remote sensing imagery expertise in support of USGS's monitoring of the glacier's movements. The glacier has a history of rapid advances and retreats. Before long BLM would use remote sensing applications to identify sensitive waterfowl habitat. Research would expand into other discipline areas due to agreements Payne was able to negotiate with the universities of Alaska, Michigan and Iowa.

But the University of Alaska has the largest presence at the glacier. The seal capture team is one of four UAA research teams working there. Last year, the team counted



NMFS Permit #1003-1665-00

600 harbor seals while this summer they returned for 10 days to capture seals.

The analysis of captured seals' blood, size, weight and the monitoring of their movements would give scientists some clues to why there are so many harbor seals populating icebergs produced by the retreating glacier.

The "ice haul" is one of the largest observed in Alaska says Payne. He says they've been surprised at the number of seals and have observed peaks of approximately 1,000 animals.

What are they eating? Why are

they there? Where are they traveling? The team is trying to answer these questions.

Before they could take to the water, **Jake Schlapfer**, an outdoor recreation specialist with the Anchorage Field Office and boating safety expert taught the UAA team safe boating techniques. Three days of instruction with forays into Vitus Lake was exactly what they needed. Schlapfer says, "I wanted them to have practical experience in the environment they'd be working."

Guyer, who does most of the logistics for the camp, says he was somewhat skeptical of the capture at first. "We only caught one seal, during the first three days." Things got better when two nets were used instead of one and 12 seals were eventually captured.

Capturing seals involved the coordination of three Zodiac boats operated by UAA staff and Guyer. Many days they'd leave base camp traveling through fog and rainy weather on Vitus Lake before locating seals lounging on icebergs. Due to poor visibility they typically relied on global positioning systems (GPS) to get them to the seals and back to camp says Guyer.

Eighty foot monofilament nets were dropped and then seals were herded into the nets. They were pulled into the boats and taken to shore where they were weighed, blood samples taken and outfitted with transmitters. The seals were released without injury or incident to the seals or the team. UAA is presently working on preliminary findings.

In the meantime Guyer is already anticipating next year's field season. He and Payne have endless details to attend to. There are technical papers to be presented, coordination with returning scientists, and ... they will await word on whether grants will be awarded which will enable the camp to operate for 3 1/2 months instead of one. Just think 3 1/2 months studying one of the most special ecosystems in the world.





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**Kay Kletka**  
program analyst

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There's youthful impishness that **Kay Kletka** can't hide as she reveals facts about her life. You quickly realize that the mother of four and grandmother of nine still has a contagious zest for life. As Kletka prepares to draw the curtain on her career, there are many other curtains that she will open wider.

Kletka retired September 3, ending an almost 30-year career. She began with BLM in 1973 as a legal clerk for the land law division of resources. She steadily rose through the ranks serving as land law examiner and finally as supervisory land law examiner. Almost 20 years later, Kletka began her association with the Joint Pipeline Office's predecessor, the Branch of Pipeline Monitoring, as a program analyst.

"Kay handles many responsibilities for JPO including contracts, federal budget, and supervising staff. She will be missed," said **Gary Reimer**, deputy authorized officer.

**Patrick Bobo**, JPO administrative manager and Kletka's supervisor, said, "Kay has been the voice

of calm in an often hectic and diverse environment. She will be missed for her compassionate insight on personnel issues and her in-depth knowledge of BLM budget, procurement and contracting processes."

As she reflects on her career, Kletka initially finds it difficult to pinpoint a favorite memory but her happiest time was ... "I was working the mineral patent applications for mining claims. I enjoyed that part of the land law and I enjoyed working with the miners. I realized how hard the old miners worked, how much of their lives they devoted to making their claims work. I was determined to help them work through the claims process," said Kletka.

That determination led her to write a booklet guiding miners through the mining application process. It also was instrumental in Kletka receiving a Quality Step Increase from then BLM director **Robert Burford**.

Kletka said her most rewarding professional venture was working with the committee in 1995 that wrote the procedures and goals for the BLM/Anchorage School District cooperative intern program. The program gives high school seniors and juniors training and experience working in a professional environment.

Kletka ensured JPO's participation in the intern program and hired a dozen or so students over the past eight years. Her impact on the former interns' lives is illustrated by the inches-thick stack of correspondence and graduation invitations that she has accumulated.

"High school hire is a great opportunity to start promoting youth, to transition them from being a high school kid to working in an adult environment."

"Kay has done a wonderful job serving as a shepherd to a diverse range of students," said Reimer.

But a person is more than her job and in this case, Kletka is a kaleidoscope of personalities.

She loves sports, especially basketball. "I'm from Indiana," says the former grade school cheerleader, "I'm a Hoosier. I grew up playing alley basketball with my brother and his friends."

Now she's become the spectator extraordinaire, attending local sporting competitions to include the UAA Seawolves and high school championship games. Last year her passion for sports and pride for her granddaughter's talent took her to Oregon to attend her granddaughter's college basketball games.

Another ray in the kaleidoscope is Kletka's venture into racing. In the early 70s, she raced her convertible green Fiat Spyder in autocross races at Elmendorf Air Force Base and participated in car rallies.

Then there's the Kletka who listens to classical music and has a penchant for Irish tenors. And of course there's her love of giraffes. Until recently, Kletka's office walls and her shelves were adorned with her favorite animal.

What's become of all those stuffed animals and prints?

"I'm converting my spare bedroom into a safari room," she said.

"There's just a lot of things I want to do but work has always kept me from doing."

Kletka's retirement plans are changing that. In December, she plans to spend a month with her son, Kris, and his family in Colorado Springs. When she returns, she'll once again be a volunteer tutor, after a two-year hiatus, for the literacy council's English as a second language program. Then there's the gardening and the home projects.

More than one curtain will be opening for Kletka. *Written by Donna Gindle, public affairs specialist for the Joint Pipeline Office.*

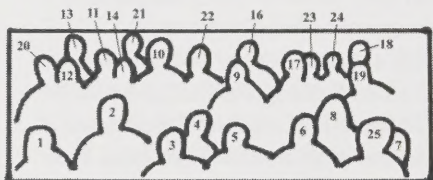


# Are students the answer to BLM's impending brain drain?

by Pam Eldridge

With 40 percent of BLM-AK employees eligible for retirement within the next five years, the question burning in many managers' minds – Who is going to do these people's work? Several studies point to student employment as a key component to BLM's employment future. BLM faces a brain drain as new retirees take their experience and expertise with them.

You may have seen a few younger faces around the workplace this summer. Students were on survey crews and archeological digs. Others draft survey plats, conduct river inventories, and provide administrative work. They come from universities and local high schools. While these students gain valuable work experience, the real gains for BLM is the potential of new employees within the next few years.



BLM advertises nationwide STEP and SCEP positions on the BLM QuickHire website. Launched in December 2000, the website features complete information about the two programs, lists current STEP and SCEP positions and accepts on-line job applications. The QuickHire website is located at <http://www.nc.blm.gov/jobs>. This is not the only method of applying for a job; students may also contact any BLM office or supervisor directly.

In 1994, the Office of Personnel Management replaced the university co-op and other student programs with the Student Educational Employment Program or SEEP. These programs are operational in all federal agencies, not just BLM. The SEEP has two major elements: Student Temporary Employment Program, or STEP, and the Student Career Employment Program, or SCEP. As long as a student is actively

for high school students. Presently managed by **Greg Balen**, the School Business Partnership Program places high school students in the State Office and the Anchorage Field Office. In FY 2000, 17 students contributed almost 9,000 hours. These numbers are impressive but actually Balen reports this is a reduction of 4,000 hours from 1999 because four eligible positions went unfilled. **Roy Walker**, EEO manager,

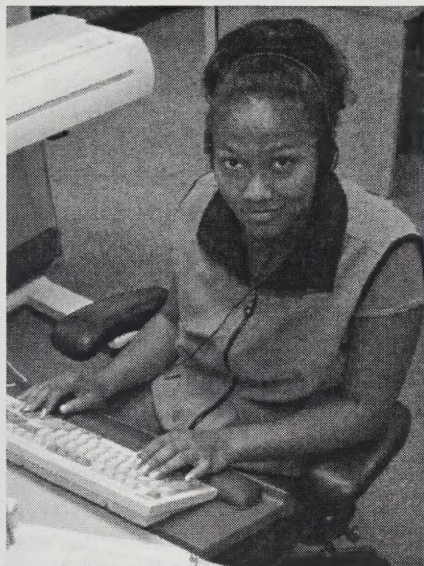


*Students attended an end of season barbeque recognizing their work during the summer field season:* **Students:** 1) Makeda Perryman, 2) Kyle Siemens, 3) Christie Jennings, 4) Britney Breaud, 5) Krystal Owens, 6) Christina Myers, 7) Priscilla Hammon, 8) Pam Eldridge, 9) Jason Robinson, 10) Adam Stewart, 11) Nathan Thomas, 12) Kimberly Robinson, 13) John McDonald, 14) Beverly Melovidov, 16) Eileen Newman, 17) Neil Torquiano, 18) Sam Park, **BLM staff:** 19) Brian Lax, 20) Laura Lagstrom, 21) Mark Meyer, 22) Greg Balen, 23) Dominica Van Koten, 24) Tonyua Abrom, 25) Cathy Dewar. Not pictured—Genie Cruz, Lori Nelson.

enrolled in an approved degree program, the student can qualify for work under either program. (See sidebar.) In addition to the STEP and SCEP programs, the BLM Alaska State Office has a year-round partnership program with the Anchorage School District

affirms student programs are definitely a part of the solution to the future employment gap. Upper management supports student programs and the Washington Office funds a number of SCEP positions for each state. This is like having free workers because the





Mekeda Perryman is a student working for Cadastral Survey. Right—Ryan Bowman a student working for the Glennallen Field Office (standing), reviews his field notes.

money does not come out of our budget Walker says, but positions go unfilled. All current student employment programs are underutilized. Walker use to divide his time between his regular full-time EEO duties and promoting the SEEP student programs. Now a newly created recruiter position dedicated to student programs relieves him of those responsibilities.

A new study mandated by the Office of Management and Budget called Workforce Planning, will predict the composition of the federal work force through 2008. **Sandy Dunn** is conducting this study for BLM-Alaska. The study will look at the present and plan for the skills BLM will need in future employees.

Dunn says, as people retire, transitioning will include succession planning, recruitment, retraining, and students. This is perfect time to introduce students to BLM's culture, mentor, and help them determine helpful college courses. BLM-Alaska has adopted a policy guaranteeing SCEP students a full time position when they graduate.

"The SCEP is converted to an full time employee," Dunn explains. Although the FTE must be eventually budgeted for, while the student is a SCEP some of the funding, if not all, can come from the Washington office. Workforce Planning is a tool that will allow BLM to see when student programs will most benefit the agency. Time is ripe, Dunn emphasizes, for all the student programs to be more fully utilized.

Although this potential source of employees won't fill all the vacancies left by the retiring masses, it will play a significant part in filling the gap. These students receive training from their universities in the latest business practices, but will have benefit from mentoring by retiring BLM professionals.

**Ryan Bowman**, a seasonal archaeologist with the Glennallen Field Office has just finished his bachelor's degree at the University of Oklahoma. For Bowman, training is an attractive feature about working for BLM. He's had aviation safety, bear safety and first aid/CPR. In the outside world it would cost lots of money. BLM makes sure we're safe and trained Bowman said. He learned about the STEP/SCEP programs through a professor. Bowman plans to return to work in the Tangle Lakes Archaeological District next summer and eventually hopes to work for the Dept. of Defense as an archaeologist. Bowman begins graduate work this fall.

Hearing about these programs from professors, counselors and teachers is a key to how to reach more students. Local high schools ask for presentations; university classes regularly visit BLM to hear specialists describe their educational backgrounds and jobs. The demand reinforces the need for the

full-time coordinator in the EEO shop to promote the student programs. The programs can be successful, but only if people know about them and use them. Not every student who participates in an employment program will, of course, become a full-time federal employee. Some students just want a summer job, discover they don't like federal work, or pursue



regular employment elsewhere. But for students who want permanent employment with BLM through the SCEP program, Walker, Dunn, and Balen all have the same advise: talk to your supervisor, EEO and personnel. Personnel and EEO work together to make the STEP/SCEP programs work.

**Maggie Perryman**, a recent high school graduate working at Cadastral Field Survey, attended the student orientation at the Anchorage Field Office in July. After learning more about the student employment programs, Perryman said, "I just found out I can come back next year during summer break. That's so cool; I can hardly wait."

For more information about the STEP/SCEP programs contact Tonyua Abrom, BLM's recruiter at 271.5507.

Pam Eldridge is a STEP with External Affairs working on her public relations degree at the University of Alaska, Anchorage.



# Noble Deed Remembered in Tragic Nuiqsut Crash

If you ask **Greg Noble** about September 18, 2000, he'll say he can't remember much about the crash. For Noble, petroleum engineer with the Anchorage Field Office, he was on his way to do some routine inspection of oil well drilling sites in the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska (NPRA) with BLM geologist **Chris Gibson**. But it would prove to be a not so routine landing at Nuiqsut.

Upon landing at the tiny village airport, Noble and the other passengers suddenly realized the

bumping and grinding they were experiencing meant the landing gear was still up. The pilot tried to remedy the situation by taking the plane into the air. They would get no more than 100 to 150 feet into the air before the plane began to shudder and descend to the ground. Noble said, "I remember someone calmly saying, 'We're going to crash.'"

People rolled forward and tucked their heads but Noble said his hockey experience had him do otherwise. "I wanted to protect my head because if you hit your head in a bent position you'll break your neck," he said. He sat back in his chair and when the plane hit the runway his face smashed into the seat in front of him breaking his nose in several places, his cheek bones and pushing his teeth up into face.

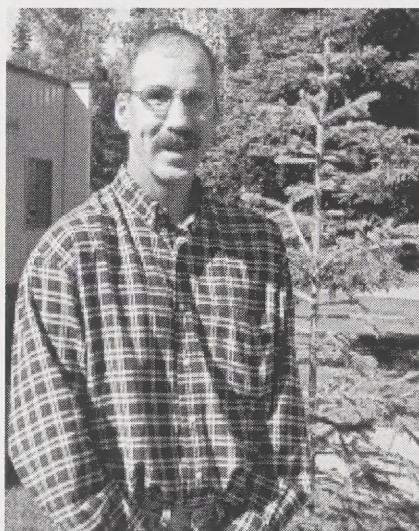
He was in a daze. To his left Shaun, a cook from Nuiqsut, was frantically fumbling to get the emergency exit door open. Noble helped release Shaun's seatbelt before they could manage to open the exit door and get out. Next Noble encountered a fellow passenger on fire who he helped. Noble then tried to enter the flaming aircraft but it was too hot.

A Native kid pulled him away

from the flaming wreck telling Noble, who was drenched with aviation fuel, that he would catch on fire. As villagers gathered, Noble was taken to the village clinic. As he laid in his clinic bed, events slowly came back to him. Where was everybody? People in the clinic referred to him and the other passengers by numbers, not by their names. And they weren't using many numbers. He said, "I kept asking, where's Chris? Did he make it? He would later learn that five of the 10 passengers would live and Chris wasn't one of them. Passengers seated in front of Noble and one person behind him would die due to smoke inhalation and fire as reported in the final National Transportation Safety Board report. Although he hadn't known Gibson for long, Noble says he regrets his inability to rescue him. "Chris was a good guy," he said. At the time of the crash Noble was new to BLM-Alaska coming from BLM's Pinedale, Wyoming office just three weeks earlier.

When Noble left his Anchorage hospital bed, he said the six weeks with his wired shut mouth didn't affect him that much. "I used a straw to eat but I could still talk on the phone," he said. Noble credits his speedy recovery to the goodwill of the Anchorage Field Office staff who gave him encouragement and a food blender and **Peter Ditton**, the acting Anchorage Field manager who made him soup. "The doctors said I'd lose 20 pounds. I didn't lose a pound, thanks to Peter," said Noble.

On Sept. 4, Noble was in Washington, D.C. with his family to receive the Bureau's valor award for his efforts during the crash. He joined other federal Department of Interior employees recognized for their valiancy. Although he downplays his actions it's obvious that he made a difference. Noble said, "It doesn't feel like I need an award. Things just happened and I was there."



Greg Noble stands in front of blue spruce planted in front of the Anchorage Field in memory of former employee Chris Gibson.



Greg Noble and family visit with BLM director Kathleen Clarke after national awards ceremony held in Washington, D.C. in September.



# Accomplishing tasks:

by Donna Gindle

## Veteran manages issues, builds relationships

Framed certificates of appreciation and letters of accomplishment line the office walls of **Joe Hughes**, the recently promoted project manager for the Joint Pipeline Office in Valdez. But it's his handwritten quote from General Walters, a U. S. Army three star during the Vietnam War, that Hughes directs his attention.

*It's amazing what can be accomplished if you don't care who gets the credit for it.*

This sums up Hughes' leadership and professional credo. The Cut Bank, Montana native admits to having crude oil in his veins. His father worked for an oil company 34 years and Hughes began working summers in oil fields while still in high school. After earning a petroleum engineering degree from Montana Tech, he worked oil and gas fields in Wyoming, Montana and Colorado. Most recently, he worked for the geothermal program in Ridgecrest, Calif. in a cooperative program between DOD and the industry.

He and his wife Sherrie moved to Valdez in February 1999. They have two grown children: Willie, is a career Army noncommissioned officer, and Athena, who recently finished an active duty tour with the US Navy .

Hughes is a man who doesn't mind staying in the background. Yet, his quick responses to technical questions and his clear understanding of complex systems and data ensure that he's no lightweight.

These characteristics suit him well for the professional challenge that he faces: building a viable working relationship between Alyeska Pipeline Service Company, the Prince William Sound's

(PWS) Regional Citizen Advisory Council (RCAC), and the JPO. The RCAC is federally mandated citizens oversight of the Valdez Marine Terminal and PWS. It advises the oil industry and government regulators on opera-

Both want to run TAPS safely. Anyone who has ever worked controversial or sensitive issues, realizes there's lots of room for mistakes and consensus.

It is so important to listen to what people think before telling



Joe Hughes onboard a tugboat in the Prince William Sound.

tions that could impact the PWS, VMT and tanker operations. Hughes assesses his situation, "Alyeska and RCAC have different goals, different agendas and different views on how I should do my job. . . . Alyeska may not like some of the stipulations in the grant and lease. But that's part of doing business. I communicate to Alyeska that my actions are not personal, but rather something that must be done. At other times, I'll listen to Alyeska and realize that we're discussing a gray area and there are no right or wrong answers.

With RCAC, I try to communicate and work issues and seek resolutions at the local level. Boiled down RCAC and Alyeska's expectations are almost the same.

them what you think. If you don't really listen, you'll never get the job done. Our office's most effective tool is and will continue to be communication.

For Hughes to be successful at his job he says all parties involved must cooperate and coordinate.

The former U. S. Army UH-1 (Huey) helicopter pilot who flew 1,500 combat hours as a member of the 68th Medical Group Detachment in Vietnam is in the midst of two situations where he'll get to test his skills and management style.

Hughes explained, "The Valdez Marine Terminal has been the subject of concern regarding clean water and air and the proper functioning of



## cool news

**Linda Rundell**, associate state director since 1999 will return to her home state of New Mexico as state director in mid-December. She is one of five new BLM state directors named in



**Linda Rundell**

late in October by Director Kathleen Clarke. Rundell served in New Mexico before as the district manager for the Las Cruces Field Office.



(l-r) Temporary survey technician Evan Bobby and surveyor Mike Wilson staffed BLM's recruitment booth at the Alaska Federation of Natives Conference in October. Their promotion of the cadastral survey program resulted in 30 interested Native youth requesting more information. Dan Johnson also helped with staffing.

*continued from page 7*

fire systems at the terminal. He said JPO is aggressively working on these issues with regulators and authorities. "We've been put in a situation where rather than strictly researching and resolving problems, we've had to play catch up after critics play out problems in the press."

How will Hughes gauge his success? "On a particular issue, I will know if I've been successful if all sides are happy with me or if all sides are displeased with me. That will mean that I have bridged the gap between opposite sides to find a workable solution."

Although this fishing and boating enthusiast has his work cut out for him, he's convinced that he can handle the stress. "This is no stress after what I lived through in Vietnam. At least these people are not shooting bullets," said Hughes.

Also assigned to the JPO's Valdez office are BLMers **William Harrison, Faith Leader** and **Beth Ann Pipkin** (student). Ron Doyel represents the Dept. of Environmental Conservation. Gindlle is a public affairs specialist for the Joint Pipeline Office.

### **Alaska People**

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